
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Work Programme

2. We have considered our work programme and had a brief update on the on-going task and finish review group work which is currently being undertaken in relation to medication in care homes. A more detailed report on the progress, to date, of this work will be reported to our next meeting.

Community Based Advice and Support – Darlington Help Hub

3. The Director of the Darlington Partnership has given us an update on the Darlington Help Hub, which aims to provide community based advice and support to those facing crisis due to poverty.
4. Members will be aware that the new contact centre at the Town Hall has recently opened and, in addition to access to Council services, it also provides access to other advice and support agencies such as the Darlington Credit Union and Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and is proving successful. We were advised that although the CAB had not long been up and running for long in the Contact Centre, at the time of our report, 40 individuals had been seen in 18 days and advice and assistance had been given to enable them to prioritise their debts to prevent them from losing either housing or a vehicle essential to enable them to stay in employment; resolve non-priority debts through payment arrangements; and assist individuals in applying for hardship payment and other benefits.
5. In addition to the support available within the Contact Centre, Help Hub provision is now also provided at St Mary's Community Centre in Cockerton on Thursday afternoons and at the King's Centre on Monday afternoons and we were advised that feedback from staff and agencies who attend those sessions is also very positive.
6. Following the success of the Help Hub, the Community Based Advice and Support Group is now looking to expand the outreach provision to other areas and is exploring other sources of funding to expand and prolong the provision.

Dementia Strategy

7. We held a joint special meeting with the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 19th May, 2014, to consider and formulate a response to the draft County Durham and Darlington Dementia Strategy, prior to its consideration by the

Health and Well Being Boards of County Durham and Darlington.

8. The Strategy has been developed by a Dementia Strategy Task Group, comprising a number of organisations within County Durham and Darlington with the aim of ensuring that the needs of people with dementia and their carers are planned for in the future and contains a number of actions which will, if approved, be focussed on over the next three years to address the challenges faced to ensure that County Durham and Darlington have the best possible services in place for those who have dementia, their carers and families, and for those who have not yet been diagnosed.
9. We agreed to support the draft Strategy as a working document and acknowledged that Scrutiny have a key role in helping to deliver and monitor the actions contained within it, particularly in engaging local communities and businesses to become dementia friendly and we will continue to receive regular update reports.

Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee